ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A method and apparatus is disclosed for transforming hierarchical information into a rowset and for transforming a rowset into hierarchical information. In transforming hierarchical information, such as an XML data file, into a rowset, a parser parses the XML data file to form an active store. A query processor, after receiving a query including a number of metaproperties, processes data from the XML active store to form a rowset. The rowset can be processed further using a query language, such as the Structured Query Language (SQL). After processing, the rowset can be converted back into an XML data file using an XML formatter. An overflow feature facilitates the addition of text data to the rowset. A fusion feature facilitates defining a relationship between different data items in the rowset such that they can be merged into a single data element as the rowset is converted into an XML data file.